


Committee to start work on allocating VW diesel-scandal funds

 nwi.com/business/local/committee-to-start-work-on-allocating-vw-diesel-scandal-funds/article_28133d2c-55b5-57a2-9689-32a496c1c791.html
Andrew Steele andrew.steele@nwi.com, 219-933-3241

12/14/2017

PORTAGE — The committee created to recommend uses for Indiana's share of \$2.8 billion in settlement money Volkswagen will pay in recompense for its diesel-emissions scandal will have its first meeting Jan. 11.

Indiana's share is \$40.9 million, committee member Kay Nelson, the environmental affairs director for the Northwest Indiana Forum, reminded the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission on Thursday.

It will be doled out over a three-year period to fund projects that improve air quality by reducing diesel emissions.

"I'm encouraging all the communities to think outside the box, to think big," Nelson said.

She said the 11-member Indiana Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust Fund Committee will meet five times in different parts of the state, including Northwest Indiana.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management will create the scoring system for evaluating grant applications. It has established a website at www.in.gov/idem/airquality/2712.htm with information on the program, and a draft framework that's open to public comment.

According to IDEM, "funds may be used to pay some or all of the cost to repower or replace eligible diesel-powered vehicles with new diesel or alternative fueled or all-electric engines or vehicles."

NIRPC Executive Director Ty Warner said Shawn Seals, a senior environmental manager at IDEM, will be at NIRPC's Jan. 18 meeting to discuss the VW program in more detail.

The funds will be distributed in annual installments beginning in 2018, and are to be used by 2028.

"Think big and get your list ready," said Beverly Shores Town Councilman Geof Benson, who chairs NIRPC's Environmental Management Policy Committee.

Household travel survey

Action by the NIRPC board at Thursday's meeting included approval of a \$276,000 contract with the research and statistics company Westat to produce a Household Travel and Activity Survey for Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties.

The study, required by the federal government, will track travel patterns by surveying a representative sampling of households. The project will take two years, and is being done in conjunction with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's survey for northeastern Illinois.

Funding comes from federal sources and a 20 percent local match from the Regional Development Authority and LaPorte County.